

## Do I ever have a place in the sun? A critical perspective on Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*

Rob Compaijen\*

*Department of Philosophy, University of Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium*

*(Received 14 August 2014; final version received 26 January 2015)*

Søren Kierkegaard advocates, in his *Works of Love*, a rigorous ideal of neighbor love. When one is confronted with this ideal of self-sacrifice and love for the enemy, one inevitably wonders whether such a life of neighbor love is livable. In this article, I ask (1) whether Kierkegaard indeed allows for limits on neighbor love, and (2) if neighbor love is limitless, whether there are, on his account, good reasons to live such a life. In elaborating these issues, I aim to show that Kierkegaard is unable to show that his conception of neighbor love is recognizably good, which implies, as I will make clear, that his ethic of neighbor love runs the risk of undermining itself.

**Keywords:** Søren Kierkegaard; *Works of Love*; neighbor love; moral motivation; divine commands

### I. Introduction

Lars von Trier's *Dogville* (2003) tells the story of Grace, a young woman trying to survive in the small town of Dogville, where she has found shelter after she fled from her father and his violent accomplices. In return for their hospitality, the inhabitants of Dogville demand that Grace contribute to the community in a variety of ways. She starts by doing some minor, almost redundant tasks, but very soon is forced to do heavy physical labor, which eventually leads to humiliation, exploitation, and abuse. In a troubling way, Von Trier illustrates the fate of Grace in a world determined by reciprocity and tit for tat. The question *Dogville* confronts us with, is whether a life of radical love could ever be livable, let alone desirable.

Christian ethics, with its emphasis on forgiveness and love for one's enemy, specifically seems prone to this question and the distress it expresses. One author who has given much thought to the Christian conception of neighbor love and, moreover, has a sensibility for the limitless elements therein is Søren Kierkegaard. By writing that the essence of neighbor love is 'infinite, inexhaustibility, immeasurability',<sup>1</sup> so that the person loving one's neighbor 'never rests satisfied in the delusion of being finished',<sup>2</sup> Kierkegaard suggests that neighbor love is indeed without limits or boundaries. This gives rise to a philosophically important question: if neighbor love, as Kierkegaard seems to argue, is indeed limitless, why would I want to love my neighbor? If, like Grace in *Dogville*, I could (perhaps *should*) perish in loving others, why would I be motivated to love my neighbor? By focusing on the supposedly limitless character of neighbor love, then, we naturally stumble upon the subject of moral motivation. Are there, in light of the

---

\*Email: [jurjan.compaijen@uantwerpen.be](mailto:jurjan.compaijen@uantwerpen.be)

possibly (perhaps *necessarily*) risky or dangerous nature of neighbor love, good reasons to love one's neighbor? It is, in this respect, important to see that Kierkegaard claims that neighbor love is an obligation, grounded in a divine command. This seems to only reinforce our problem: indeed, could there ever be good reasons to obey a divine command?

This article will explore these questions on the basis of Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*. In Section II, I will explore whether Kierkegaard's conception of neighbor love leaves room for limits in loving the neighbor. In Section III, I will investigate whether there are, in Kierkegaard's view, good reasons for obeying the divine command to love one's neighbor. In the conclusion, I will summarize my argument and criticize Kierkegaard's analysis of neighbor love.

The subject of the limits of love has not received proper attention in the literature on Kierkegaard's ethical thought. In fact, the only more or less extensive treatment of this issue seems to be in Jamie Ferreira's excellent commentary on *Works of Love*. However, as will become clear in Section II, I do not agree with her views on this subject. One of the aims of this article is thus to bring forth a new perspective on this important element of Kierkegaard's views on neighbor love. Another aim is to discuss and assess what I consider to be the most important accounts of Kierkegaard's thoughts on the recognizable goodness of neighbor love, and its implications for the problem of moral motivation. As will become clear in Section III, I believe each of these accounts ultimately distorts Kierkegaard's views on this fundamental ethical subject. Finally, and most importantly, I aim to develop a new critical perspective on Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*. Yet, this critique extends beyond the domain of Kierkegaard studies, as I believe that it applies equally well to a tendency that is present in Protestant philosophy and theology quite generally: the tendency to strictly separate the natural and the moral spheres.

## II. Limitless neighbor love in Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*

In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard aims to discuss the Christian conception of love in all its richness and variety. It discusses, for example, the relation between, on the one hand, neighbor love and, on the other, friendship and erotic love; it examines the paradoxical fact that, in Christianity, love is obligatory; it asks in which respects remembering the dead can be conceived as a work of love; and so forth. Here, I will focus on only one of the many subjects discussed in *Works of Love*: the question of whether there are limits to the self-sacrifice that is implied in neighbor love. As Kierkegaard views neighbor love as love for unconditionally every human being, we already have a first answer to our question: neighbor love is limitless in an *extensive* sense: it does not exclude anyone. However, the (arguably) more interesting question that I will take up in this section is whether neighbor love, in Kierkegaard's view, is also limitless in (what we could call) an *intensive* sense. Are there limits to how much (or the intensity with which) I am supposed to love my fellow human beings?

Now, someone could object that this question – are there any limits on the self-sacrifice that is implied in neighbor love? – seems to imply a 'calculating' attitude, which is at odds with neighbor love as understood by Kierkegaard. What this objection misses is that the question of the limits of self-sacrifice will inevitably come up for anyone who is confronted with the Christian conception of neighbor love. As I argued in the introduction of this article, when understood properly, Christian neighbor love will necessarily give rise to a specific kind of anxiety, which Ferreira describes as follows: '[an] anxiety about the implications of what happens *if* we strive that much – namely, the possibility that we

may need to sacrifice ourselves utterly for the other, that there will be no place at which we can stop [...].<sup>3</sup> It is important to see that Kierkegaard himself is sensitive to this kind of anxiety.<sup>4</sup> Even more importantly, as we will see below, he himself asks a ‘calculating’ question: is it not possible to love the other *more* than oneself? However, even if the question of the limits of self-sacrifice were at odds with Kierkegaard’s thinking about neighbor love, this would not undermine my argument. As the question of the limits of self-sacrifice inevitably comes up, an exploration of the resources available to Kierkegaard in order to answer it, is significant. Or, as Ferreira puts it: ‘[a]ddressing this question – of the character of the sacrifice love must make for the other and the possibility of limits on that sacrifice – is an indispensable part of evaluating Kierkegaard’s ethic in *Works of Love*.’<sup>5</sup>

When reading *Works of Love*, one very soon becomes convinced that Kierkegaard advocates a very rigid life of neighbor love. Time and again, he stresses that the essence of Christian neighbor love is infinitude, inexhaustibility, immeasurability. As we have seen, he writes that it ‘never rests satisfied in the delusion of being finished’.<sup>6</sup> The demand for self-denial and self-sacrifice is ‘infinite’.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the genuinely loving person’s life ‘is completely squandered on existence, on the existence of others. Unwilling to waste any time or energy on asserting himself, on being something for himself, in his self-sacrifice he is willing to perish [...]’.<sup>8</sup> Thus, it seems crystal clear that Kierkegaard’s ethic of neighbor love does not leave any room for temperance or limitation. It is therefore not at all puzzling that Ferreira, in her commentary on *Works of Love*, asks our question, namely whether the life advocated by Kierkegaard is livable.<sup>9</sup> However, what *is* puzzling in light of the passages of *Works of Love* mentioned above, is that she believes he *does* acknowledge limits to neighbor love. Although Ferreira’s argument is not particularly clear on this point, I believe she provides three reasons for this thesis.

The *first* reason why neighbor love is limited, lies, according to Ferreira, in the fact that my existence is a gift. I should be grateful for, and take good care of my existence, because I received it from God. This means, Ferreira claims, that I can never be obligated to do so much for others that I will perish.<sup>10</sup>

The *second* reason that Ferreira provides points to the role of justice in Kierkegaard’s ethics. She acknowledges that Kierkegaard is, in *Works of Love*, critical of justice, because justice deals with the separation of ‘mine’ and ‘yours’, whereas ‘mine’ and ‘yours’ cannot have any place in neighbor love.<sup>11</sup> However, this radical thought is, according to Ferreira, mere rhetoric. In everyday life, justice always plays an important role and Kierkegaard knew this.<sup>12</sup>

The *third* reason Ferreira offers is based on the formulation of the command to love one’s neighbor. The command is: love your neighbor *as yourself*. What this means becomes clear when Ferreira points to a thought experiment Kierkegaard conducts. Kierkegaard wonders whether it is not possible (and also more praiseworthy) to love the other ‘more than oneself’.<sup>13</sup> In that case, Kierkegaard argues, we could never refuse the other anything, even when he or she asks for something that will be to his or her own harm. This, Kierkegaard argues, is plainly wrong. Such a relation is a relation of unconditional obedience and adoration, but these indicate an attitude we should only have toward God.<sup>14</sup> Unconditional obedience and adoration are inappropriate between peers.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, love aims at the best for the other. Giving the other something harmful can therefore hardly be called a work of love.

Thus, I cannot be called to love the other *more* than myself; I should love the other *as* myself. This formulation of the command to neighbor love points to the fundamental equality of all human beings: *everyone* is required to love one’s neighbor as oneself.

Invoking this extensive sense in which love is limitless, Ferreira argues that there are no exceptions to the command which implies that I should also love *myself*.<sup>16</sup> The love for oneself is even a condition for neighbor love: ‘Therefore, if anyone is unwilling to learn from Christianity to love himself in the right way, he cannot love the neighbor either.’<sup>17</sup> Loving the other properly presupposes loving oneself properly.<sup>18</sup> We are, Ferreira claims, obligated to take good care of ourselves, because otherwise we will not be able to give the other anything.<sup>19</sup> She therefore concludes that ‘there are limits to what we can be expected to do when we love another as we ought to love ourselves’.<sup>20</sup>

Is Ferreira’s conclusion justified? Ferreira’s *first* reason points to the fact that we should, out of gratitude, take care of our own existence, for it has been given to us. This is in itself, I believe, a reasonable thought, but it is problematic in the context of *Works of Love*, as it is not discussed in this book. Ferreira seems aware of this, because she does not cite any passages from *Works of Love* to strengthen her position. Quite the opposite: she refers to Levinas and Ricoeur and claims that they articulate something that we could find in *Works of Love* as well.<sup>21</sup>

Ferreira’s *second* reason refers to justice, which regulates the relation between ‘mine’ and ‘yours’ and therefore makes sure that I cannot be exploited. Here again, Ferreira does not cite passages from *Works of Love* to strengthen her argument. On the contrary, the passages she quotes actually seem to support the opposite idea – for example: ‘The one who truly loves does not seek his own. With regard to his “own,” he knows nothing about the claims of strict law or of justice, not even the claims of equity [...]’.<sup>22</sup>

Ferreira’s *third* reason – we should love the other as we love ourselves – is much more compelling, because there is strong textual evidence that supports it. Kierkegaard writes, for instance:

The commandment said, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” but if the commandment is properly understood it also says the opposite: *You shall love yourself in the right way*. [...] The Law is therefore: You shall love yourself in the same way as you love your neighbor when you love him as yourself.<sup>23</sup>

Ferreira thus does seem to be right when she concludes that Kierkegaard acknowledges limits to neighbor love.

We are now confronted with a dilemma. On the one hand, Kierkegaard seems to argue that neighbor love is infinite and limitless. That is why he writes, as I pointed out above, that the loving person’s life ‘is completely squandered on existence, on the existence of others. Unwilling to waste any time or energy on asserting himself, on being something for himself, in his self-sacrifice he is willing to perish [...]’.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, Kierkegaard very clearly states that the command to love one’s neighbor implies that we should love ourselves, as Ferreira emphasizes. Is this a blatant contradiction? Or are we overlooking something that allows us to solve this dilemma?

Note that there is a contradiction only when the command to love myself implies that I should limit my love for my neighbor. This is Ferreira’s view. However, I strongly doubt whether this interpretation of the demand of self-love can be sustained in light of *Works of Love*. Kierkegaard writes that we should love ourselves *properly*. Loving oneself properly should be understood as becoming nothing, which Kierkegaard also describes as becoming an instrument in God’s hands. The sentences following the passage I quoted above make this very clear:

Unwilling to waste any time or energy on asserting himself, on being something for himself, in his self-sacrifice he is willing to perish, that is, he is completely and wholly transformed into simply being an active power in the hands of God.<sup>25</sup>

Only by turning ‘into nothing, an unworthy servant’, a human being can express true neighbor love.<sup>26</sup> Put differently: a human being can become an instrument of love only through *constantly* denying himself, which will result not only in the loss of his own life but also in gaining it as an instrument.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, Kierkegaard explicitly argues for the limitless character of neighbor love when he writes:

As soon as you believe that you have done enough in your love or have loved long enough and now must claim something from the other, you discover that your love is in the process of becoming a requirement, as if, however self-sacrificing and devoted your love is, there were still a boundary [...]. We are not discussing here any great moment of self-denial; after all, the Law requires the same inwardness throughout the duration of time.<sup>28</sup>

It is, then, problematic to argue, as Ferreira does, that Kierkegaard’s ethic of neighbor love leaves room for limitation in an intensive sense. Kierkegaard even describes our desire for a place in the sun,<sup>29</sup> and our philosophical and theological justifications of this desire, as belonging to ‘the tempter’ (i.e. Satan<sup>30</sup>): ‘Stop your work, slow down, take it easy, enjoy life in comfort, and accept the flattering situation that is offered to you [...].’<sup>31</sup> We should therefore conclude that, in Kierkegaard’s view, an ethic of neighbor love is also limitless in an intensive sense; that is to say: it does not allow for any limits on self-sacrifice.

### III. Neighbor love and the problem of moral motivation

In light of the life advocated in Kierkegaard’s *Works of Love*, it is only natural to ask: why would I want to live such a life? Why should I live a life in which I run the risk of perishing in self-sacrifice? These questions, expressing at once defiance and distress, are, when understood philosophically, examples of the problem of moral motivation. This problem’s typical form is the question ‘Why should I...?’, which indicates (at least) a desire for reasons to perform some action. Kierkegaard’s depiction of a life of neighbor love therefore faces the question whether there are good reasons for living such a life. But the problem Kierkegaard faces is actually both more specific and more serious, because, as I mentioned in the introduction, he understands neighbor love as an obligation grounded in a divine command. He emphasizes that Christ issued the command to love our neighbors.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, the problem of moral motivation that we are discussing here should be understood against a theological background.<sup>33</sup> That is to say: the key question that I will be discussing in this section is whether there are, in Kierkegaard’s view, good reasons for obeying the divine command to love my neighbor.

#### A. The recognizable goodness of divine commands

The first answer to the question of why I should obey the divine command to neighbor love might be: ‘Because God commands you to!’ It is, however, clear that this reply does not clarify anything and will not impress anyone seriously asking our question. As Alasdair MacIntyre shows in *A Short History of Ethics*, two more sophisticated answers can be provided to the question ‘Why should I obey God’s commands?’ The first answer

points to God's *goodness*, the second answer points to God's *power*.<sup>34</sup> For reasons that will become clear, I think that a reference to God's power does not suffice to solve our problem of moral motivation. Let us therefore look at the answer that refers to God's goodness. Although, as we can see, MacIntyre's analysis is based on a slightly different question than the question I am asking in this article, it is clear that his analysis is also highly relevant for my question.

MacIntyre makes clear that the answer referring to God's goodness can only count as a meaningful answer when 'good' has a clear and distinct content: 'Since this answer has to function as a reason for obedience to God, it follows that "good" must be defined in terms other than those of obedience to God if we are to avoid a vacuous circularity.'<sup>35</sup> If 'good' means nothing more than 'what God commands', we have not made any progress with regard to the first answer we discussed. And this has a very important consequence: 'It follows that I must have access to criteria of goodness which are independent of my awareness of divinity.'<sup>36</sup> In other words, a reference to God's goodness in this context makes sense only when we can give content to this goodness by describing it in terms of our own, independent conceptions and standards of goodness. Or, put differently, a reference to God's goodness in this context makes sense only when we can *recognize* God's goodness *as goodness* in light of our own *independent* or *natural* conceptions of the good. MacIntyre's reasoning entails an important insight for our attempts to answer our question, because, as I shall now argue, it can only be answered when we are able to recognize the divine command to neighbor love as good in light of our own conceptions of goodness.

'Are there good reasons for obeying the divine command to love my neighbor?' is not a question for reasons to obey God in *general*, but a question for reasons to obey a *particular* divine command. That is to say: it is a question on the authority of the specific command to neighbor love. Like MacIntyre's distinction between goodness and power, we could understand the authority of a particular divine command as *moral* authority or as authority grounded in *power*. Now, if the divine command to neighbor love possesses moral authority, this implies that we can understand that and why neighbor love is good. The moral authority of the divine command to neighbor love thus presupposes the *recognizable goodness* of neighbor love. And, as MacIntyre makes clear, this, in turn, presupposes that our independent or natural conceptions of the good are in line with neighbor love. Only when we can recognize neighbor love as good on the basis of our own independent conceptions of the good, does it possess moral authority. Of course it is possible that a given divine command is not recognizably good. In that case, the divine command is not without authority as such, but it *is* without *moral* authority. However, authority that is not moral authority should be understood as authority grounded in power, which, in this case, means: grounded in the power of the God commanding. When I obey a divine command simply because of the power of the commanding God, I am not obeying for good reasons. In that case, I am not loving my neighbor because I see that a life of neighbor love is a *good* life, but because I fear the consequences of my disobedience and/or because I expect to be rewarded for my obedience.

Now, it is deeply problematic when the authority of the divine command to love one's neighbor is not moral authority but authority grounded in power, because in that case, my obedience can only spring from self-interested motives. When my motivation to love my neighbor is based solely on my recognition of divine power, it is essentially selfish. But, for obvious reasons, an ethic of neighbor love based on selfish interests or motives undermines itself radically. Or, as MacIntyre puts it:

If I am liable to be sent to hell for not doing what God commands, I am thereby provided with a corrupting, because totally self-interested, motive for pursuing the good. When self-interest is made as central as this, other motives are likely to dwindle in importance and a religious morality becomes self-defeating, at least insofar as it was originally designed to condemn pure self-interest.<sup>37</sup>

Fearing the consequences of my disobedience and expecting to be rewarded for my obedience, thus, are clearly no good reasons to obey the divine command to neighbor love, as they undermine an ethic of neighbor love. But, in line with MacIntyre's argument, I believe that it is inevitable to act for selfish reasons when neighbor love is not recognizably good. Thus, if Kierkegaard wants to avoid his strenuous ethic of neighbor love undermining itself, he should be able to make it clear that there *could be* good reasons for obeying the divine command. And as we now know, this implies that he needs to show that neighbor love is recognizably good. Is he able to do this?

Any attempt to argue that the content of a divine command (such as neighbor love) is recognizably good faces an important objection. Someone could argue that by speaking about its recognizable goodness, I am not doing justice to God's transcendence and the radical difference between God and human beings. It is presumptuous to speak about the recognizable goodness of God and that which he commands: as if our moral categories could ever be in line with God. This objection is implied in the views defended by the Flemish philosopher Paul Moyaert in his important book *De mateloosheid van het chistendom* [*The measurelessness of Christianity*], in which he argues that the Christian God is radically sovereign and transcendent.<sup>38</sup> For that reason he writes that 'Because God transcends everything it is constantly possible that what He asks from us radically contradicts what we, from our point of view, experience as good and evil'.<sup>39</sup> This means, Moyaert claims, that we should obey God unconditionally, even when his will and desire radically go against our views of the good.<sup>40</sup>

Moyaert's position is particularly strong as an objection against my approach, because he bases his views upon Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*. He mainly refers to one particular passage in *Works of Love*, a passage that should be considered of utmost importance for our subject:

But you shall love God in unconditional obedience, even if what he requires of you might seem to you to be to your own harm, indeed, harmful to his cause; for God's wisdom is beyond all comparison with yours, and God's governance has no obligation of responsibility in relation to your sagacity. All you have to do is to obey in love.<sup>41</sup>

Moyaert, then, seems right in basing his views on the relation between human beings and God on *Works of Love*. The cited passage seems to prove unambiguously that every attempt to argue for the recognizable goodness of neighbor love has to fail *a priori*, because Kierkegaard seems to claim explicitly that we should leave behind all our independent conceptions of the good when relating to God and his commands.

However, I believe that this conclusion is false (or at least premature) for two reasons. *First*, when we read the passage cited above again, we might notice that he writes that we should obey God not blindly, but *lovingly*. Now, it is possible to blindly obey anyone who has sufficient power, even a torturer, tyrant or dictator. *Loving* obedience, however, presupposes that we can (at least partly) know the character of the person demanding our obedience and, more specifically, that we can recognize this character as somehow praiseworthy or good.<sup>42</sup> Although Kierkegaard stresses in *Works of Love* that God is

superior to human beings, he does not seem to believe that God is *completely* transcendent and different from human beings.

*Second*, Kierkegaard carefully writes: ‘even if what he requires of you might seem to you to be to your own harm, indeed, harmful to his cause.’ It is important to see that he acknowledges the *possibility* that some of things God commands are not recognizably good. And in such a case, however problematic, Kierkegaard tells us we should indeed obey God (as it were) ‘blindly’. But that this is *possible*, makes clear that God’s commands do not *necessarily* contradict our natural moral beliefs. Both reasons show that we do not necessarily have to leave behind our natural conceptions of the good in relating to God’s commands. However, those conceptions cannot be used with regard to *all* of God’s commands. Consequently, we will have to look specifically at Kierkegaard’s account of the divine command to neighbor love to see whether it is recognizably good.

### ***B. The recognizable goodness of the divine command to neighbor love***

Does neighbor love appear as good in light of our independent or natural conceptions of goodness? In order to answer this question, we should come to know, of course, what Kierkegaard takes to be the core (if there is any) of our natural conceptions of the good. However, because *Works of Love* is not a treatise in moral philosophy, he does not provide us with an account of the character of our natural moral beliefs. Yet, by exploring how we, in his view, *factually* value neighbor love, we are able to reconstruct his views on our natural conceptions of the good.

In the scholarly literature on *Works of Love*, we encounter, with regard to the question of the recognizable goodness of neighbor love, three different positions. The *first* can be found in the work of Moyaert. He writes that neighbor love implies a ‘*break with and denial of* our sensory nature as possible reference point for the morally good life’.<sup>43</sup> To substantiate that claim, he focuses on the divine command to love our enemy and writes: ‘No human being is naturally inclined to love his enemy.’<sup>44</sup> The enemy, as the one who is harmful, is, essentially, repulsive.<sup>45</sup> ‘Loving your enemy is always hurtful, never pleasant and in every way unnatural.’<sup>46</sup> Consequently, love for the enemy completely shakes up our natural inclinations: we are commanded to love that which repels us. The divine command to neighbor love is not directed to perfecting human nature, but, on the contrary, ‘violates human nature’.<sup>47</sup> It is, therefore, impossible to recognize the divine command to neighbor love as good on the basis of our natural conceptions of the good. Moyaert claims that Kierkegaard stresses precisely this when he emphasizes the offense neighbor love causes.<sup>48</sup>

But although Moyaert refers to a line of thought that is definitely present in *Works of Love*, a closer look makes clear that his position is a one-sided emphasis on the offensive character of neighbor love, because Kierkegaard describes it as praiseworthy at the same time. In the ‘Conclusion’ of *Works of Love*, he discusses the first epistle of the apostle John and paraphrases it as follows: ‘[...] to love people is the only thing worth living for, and without this love you are not really living. Moreover, to love people is the only blessed comfort both here and in the next world [...]’.<sup>49</sup> This shows that neighbor love is, in Kierkegaard’s view, not *necessarily* offensive, but that it is *possible* to recognize it as good. Moreover, we catch the first glimpse of what it means, in Kierkegaard’s view, to recognize neighbor love as good: neighbor love makes life worth living for, and makes us truly happy. This is, paradoxically, also implied in Moyaert’s position, for he claims that neighbor is principally not recognizable as good because it is impossible to see how

practicing neighbor love could ever make us happy, how it could ever contribute to a perfection of human nature.

Contrary to Moyaert, the *second* position we encounter in the literature does justice to the fact that Kierkegaard, through the category of ‘the apostle’, acknowledges that neighbor love can be viewed as morally praiseworthy. We find this position in the works of Philip L. Quinn and Robert Stern. Unlike Moyaert, they state that Kierkegaard acknowledges that neighbor love is recognizably good. But the apostle or ‘saint’ who recognizes neighbor love as good should, according to them, not be viewed as a realistic ideal for ‘ordinary’ people, for whom the latter neighbor love will never be recognizably good.

It is striking how similar Quinn’s and Stern’s positions are.<sup>50</sup> Quinn starts from the idea that for Kierkegaard, human nature is fundamentally determined by sin.<sup>51</sup> And precisely because we are sinful, we cannot experience the divine command to love our neighbor as being in line with human nature.<sup>52</sup> Stern writes about the self-denial implied in the divine command to neighbor love: ‘[...] we are required to go beyond all our natural feelings and inclinations.’<sup>53</sup> Kierkegaard’s conception of the divine command to love one’s neighbor simply demands too much from us, which becomes apparent most radically in the command to love our enemies.<sup>54</sup> Put differently, in the confrontation with the divine command to love my neighbor, I become aware of ‘the moral gap’. This notion, which Quinn and Stern derive from John Hare, refers to ‘the gap between the moral demand on us and our natural capacities to live by it’.<sup>55</sup> From Quinn’s argument, we can deduce that the moral gap manifests itself in two ways. *First*, we are unable to properly see the *imago Dei*, the reflection of God’s goodness, in our neighbor.<sup>56</sup> *Second*, we are, by our natural capacities, unable to fulfill the divine command to neighbor love.<sup>57</sup> It is precisely this moral gap, this gap between the radical demand of the command and our inability to live by it, that is the ground for the fact that the command is experienced as foolish and offensive.<sup>58</sup> Since all ordinary people (at least, when they are honest) will, according to Quinn and Stern, admit that the divine command to neighbor love is too radical, foolish and offensive, we can conclude that these authors believe neighbor love is not naturally recognizably good. I write ‘ordinary people’ because these authors, as was said above, indicate that there is a category of human beings for whom neighbor love *is* recognizably good: the apostles, or the saints.<sup>59</sup> For these ‘extraordinary’ human beings (the divine command to), neighbor love has become integral to their natural and so fully recognizably good. With regard to the recognizable goodness of neighbor love there is, then, a radical discontinuity between the apostle and all other, ordinary people.

In this respect, Quinn and Stern do more justice to *Works of Love* than Moyaert does. But their position should also be judged inadequate, because Kierkegaard acknowledges that even the ordinary person, the non-apostle, is capable of recognizing neighbor love as good. Without suggesting that this is an impossible ideal, he writes about ‘the one who truly loves’: ‘[he or she] regards loving without the reward of reciprocal love as the highest blessedness.’<sup>60</sup> And the ordinary person who becomes nothing in neighbor love, realizes, according to Kierkegaard, ‘that this annihilation before God is so blessed [...]’.<sup>61</sup> In these passages, we see again that the recognizable goodness of neighbor love is related to the insight that neighbor love gives rise to true happiness. And, moreover, they show that Kierkegaard acknowledges that also the non-saintly are capable of recognizing neighbor love as good.

The *third* position which we encounter in the secondary literature and which can be found in the works of Ferreira and C. Stephen Evans, stresses precisely this point. These authors claim that Kierkegaard, in *Works of Love*, argues that not only the apostles and the

saints, but also the ordinary people are capable of recognizing neighbor love as good. Ferreira points to the fact that Kierkegaard writes about love as a divine gift of grace: with our creation, love – which expresses itself as the need to love and to be loved – was rooted in our nature.<sup>62</sup> The command to neighbor love therefore does not aim to awaken a nonexistent love in us, but, instead, appeals to a love that is already present in human nature.<sup>63</sup> The primary function of the divine command is that it makes us aware of the fact that we already possess the love we are commanded to express.<sup>64</sup> The other function of the divine command is that it tells us *how* to love: we should not base our love on our particular preferences and limit it to friendship and erotic love.<sup>65</sup> She therefore writes that ‘the command to love is not arbitrarily imposed from outside but is grounded in the structure of our humanity’.<sup>66</sup> On the contrary, the divine command to neighbor love appeals to human nature and this means that neighbor love is recognizably good in light of our independent conceptions of the good.

Although Evans’s account in his *Kierkegaard’s Ethic of Love* departs from Ferreira’s in several ways, he agrees with Ferreira that the divine command to neighbor love appeals to a love already present in human nature.<sup>67</sup> The divine command is part of general revelation and not of special, Christian revelation. In Evans’ view, this implies, *first*, that *all* human beings can come to know that there is a divine command to love one’s neighbor.<sup>68</sup> *Second*, it also means that all human beings can recognize the divine command to love one’s neighbor as good on the basis of their independent conceptions of the good: ‘Kierkegaard does not, then, deny the possibility that the goodness of neighbor-love is something that humans can recognize even apart from a commitment to special revelation [...]’.<sup>69</sup> Evans writes that the happiness that is realized in loving one’s neighbor is ‘a good that even unloving people can recognize as good’.<sup>70</sup> Everyone can recognize neighbor love as good, because everyone is capable of understanding that neighbor love leads to true happiness. Ferreira and Evans both conclude, then, that Kierkegaard in *Works of Love* acknowledges that *all* human beings are capable of recognizing neighbor love as good, because all human beings can understand that a life of neighbor love is a truly meaningful and happy existence.

The overview of these three positions gives rise to two connected questions. *First*, is *Works of Love* ambivalent with regard to the recognizable goodness of neighbor love? This is an obvious question, because the overview above suggests that neighbor love is, in *Works of Love*, both praiseworthy (and so recognizably good) and offensive (and so *not* recognizably good). *Second*, does Kierkegaard indeed understand our conceptions of the good as eudaimonistic conceptions? Is ‘good’ indeed that which makes us truly happy, gives meaning to life, contributes to and is a part of the good, flourishing life? Since these questions are strongly connected, as will become clear, I cannot answer them separately.

In line with the position of Quinn and Stern, I believe that neighbor love is morally qualified in two distinct ways in *Works of Love*: both as praiseworthy and as reprehensible. I do not mention the other authors I discussed above, because this ambiguity is not present in their accounts. Moyaert claims that neighbor love is *simply* offensive, whereas in the accounts of Ferreira and Evans, the offensive character of neighbor love threatens to disappear completely. Kierkegaard stresses that neighbor love is, at the same time, recognizably good *and* not recognizably good. But this is not just a contradiction, because, as we have seen in discussing the views of Quinn and Stern, it is possible to distinguish between different perspectives belonging to different people. However, in contrast to these authors, I do not think that the absolute distinction between the apostle or saint and the ordinary person is correct. In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard nowhere claims that recognizing the command to neighbor love as good is impossible for ordinary people.

Yes, it is very difficult, but it is not impossible. Consequently, I believe that the fundamental distinction informing *Works of Love* is not between the saintly and the ordinary perspective on neighbor love, but, instead, between a Christian and a natural perspective; between what he describes as, on the one hand, the Christian,<sup>71</sup> and, on the other, as ‘the natural person’, ‘the world’, ‘the poet’ or ‘the pagan’.<sup>72</sup>

The idea central to Kierkegaard’s *Works of Love* is that neighbor love is praiseworthy (and so recognizably good) from the Christian perspective, whereas from a natural perspective, neighbor love is reprehensible (and so not recognizably good). Interestingly, these opposed evaluations of neighbor love can be shown to result from *formally* similar moral beliefs: Kierkegaard shows that the moral beliefs of both the Christian and the natural person are, ultimately, eudaimonistic beliefs. That is to say: recognizing neighbor love as good means, according to Kierkegaard, understanding that neighbor love makes our lives truly meaningful and happy. He writes, for instance, that ‘to love is the highest happiness’.<sup>73</sup> The apostle shows us the way of love for the neighbor, ‘the right road that guides us both to do what is right to others and to make ourselves happy’.<sup>74</sup> Being fully merged in neighbor love is actually becoming nothing, and ‘this annihilation before God is so blessed that you at every moment would seek to return to this annihilation more intensely [...]’.<sup>75</sup> And in unequivocal terms, he writes: ‘What, namely, is the highest good and the greatest blessedness? Certainly it is truly to love, and next, truly to be loved.’<sup>76</sup>

But Kierkegaard also views our natural moral beliefs as eudaimonistic. Not recognizing neighbor love as good has its grounds also in our views on flourishing and happiness, because the offense neighbor love causes arises from the idea that loving one’s neighbor will make one deeply *unhappy*. In Kierkegaard’s view, the natural person understands love as ‘erotic love and friendship’, as preferentially loving ‘this one and only beloved’.<sup>77</sup> When the natural person is then confronted with a command that *obligates* him to love *all* people (including his enemies) in *self-denial*, offense is the natural response.<sup>78</sup> The natural person is, in that case, namely obligated to ‘give up all claims on life’, while he believes that ‘the happiness of erotic love and friendship is among the very greatest claims’.<sup>79</sup> Kierkegaard, then, assumes that both praising and rejecting the divine command to neighbor love have eudaimonistic views as their background. Recognizing neighbor love as good implies believing that neighbor love makes us truly happy. Not recognizing neighbor love as good implies believing that neighbor love will deprive us from our happiness.

The Christian and the natural human being agree, according to Kierkegaard, on the fact that love is the highest good because it makes us truly happy. The reason both, notwithstanding this agreement, differ radically in their appreciation of neighbor love has to do with the fact that they give a different *content* to these formally similar moral beliefs. The Christian and the natural human being have radically different conceptions of love and happiness. With regard to love, Kierkegaard writes: ‘[...] because there is indeed the difference of infinity, the linguistic difference of an eternity between what the one party understands by love and what the other party understands by it.’<sup>80</sup> And:

There actually is a conflict between what the world understands and what God understands by love. It is easy enough to bring about an apparent agreement (as is already apparent in the use of one and the same word: ‘love’ [...]).<sup>81</sup>

The difference consists in the fact that the Christian sees neighbor love as true love,<sup>82</sup> and erotic love and friendship ultimately as self-love,<sup>83</sup> whereas the natural person views

erotic love and friendship as true love and sees neighbor love as hatred,<sup>84</sup> selfishness<sup>85</sup> and madness<sup>86</sup> – in short, as anything *but* love.

However, as I indicated, their conceptions of happiness differ radically as well. The Christian regards neighbor love as the deepest happiness. But because I have shown that Kierkegaard believes that neighbor love implies limitless self-denial, the question of course presses itself: is it possible to meaningfully connect the idea of limitless self-denial with the thesis that (the command to) neighbor love will make us truly happy? Kierkegaard claims that for the Christian, true happiness and self-denial or self-emptying are strongly connected, which is foolish and offensive to the natural human being. He writes about self-denying neighbor love, for instance, that ‘this annihilation before God is so blessed that you at every moment would seek to return to this annihilation more intensely [...]. But to worldly wisdom this, of course is and must be the greatest foolishness’.<sup>87</sup> In another passage, he again stresses this point:

Ah, the poor fool, what a laughingstock he is – in the eyes of the world! The truly loving person becomes the unconditionally injured one – which he in a certain sense makes himself by self-denial. But then the overturning of *mine* and *yours* has reached its point; and therefore love also has reached its highest blessedness within itself.<sup>88</sup>

Kierkegaard states that, for the natural human being, the self-denial that is implied in neighbor love is nothing but madness and strenuousness, the opposites of happiness. He therefore writes that the world cannot understand ‘the blessedness that the truly loving one has within himself’.<sup>89</sup>

To conclude: what are the implications of this discussion for the recognizable goodness of (the command to) neighbor love? The question we are trying to answer is: is neighbor love recognizably good in light of our *independent* or *natural* moral beliefs? It has become clear that we should conclude that Kierkegaard’s argument does not allow for the possibility of recognizing neighbor love as good on the basis of our independent moral beliefs. Neighbor love is recognizably good for the Christian, but for the natural human being, it is not. In light of our natural moral beliefs, it does not appear as good, but, instead, as offensive. Kierkegaard argues that it is *principally* not in line with our natural moral beliefs, because there is a radical discontinuity between the moral beliefs of the Christian and the natural person. By emphasizing this discontinuity, Kierkegaard suggests that the only possible way of recognizing neighbor love as good is by leaving behind our natural conceptions of the good. In the confrontation with the command to neighbor love, we will have to let go of our independent criteria to determine what is praiseworthy:

People have confused Christianity in many ways, but among them is also this way of calling it the highest and the deepest, and thereby it is made to appear as if the purely human were related to the essentially Christian as the high or the higher to the highest or the supremely highest. [...] No, the essentially Christian is certainly the highest and supremely highest, but, mark well, in such a way that to the natural man it is an offense.<sup>90</sup>

### C. *Two objections*

We have established the conclusion that (the divine command to) neighbor love is not recognizably good from a natural perspective. Given what was said in Section IIIA, this means that, for the natural human being, the command cannot possess *moral* authority,

which implies that, for such a person, there cannot be good reasons to obey it. And, as also became clear from the same section, Kierkegaard's strenuous and offensive ethic of neighbor love therefore seriously runs the risk of undermining itself. Against this conclusion, and the analysis preceding it, two strong objections could be brought forward.

*First*, someone could object that my analysis of *Works of Love* might be correct, but that the divine command to neighbor love *does* possess moral authority. From its natural conceptions of the good, a child often does not recognize its parents' *commands* as good. However, on the basis of a sense of its parents' goodness, a child can be confident that their commands are good as well, although it does not always understand why this is so. In this situation, commands possess moral authority because the one issuing the command is recognizably good. In like manner, we could argue that the command to love one's neighbor does possess moral authority for the natural human being, because he or she is able to recognize God's (or Christ's) goodness.

However, this objection fails. The reason it fails is that, as we have seen, recognizing something as good implies, in Kierkegaard's view, understanding that it will constitute flourishing happiness. According to the objection, Kierkegaard could show in *Works of Love* that the natural person is capable of understanding that God aims at our flourishing. Yet, Kierkegaard emphasizes in many passages that Christ, the God-man who promulgates the command to love one's neighbor, necessarily comes into conflict with the natural person. The relation between the natural human being and Christ is, again, determined by *offense*.<sup>91</sup> About Christ, he writes that 'his whole life was a horrible collision with the merely human conception of what love is'.<sup>92</sup> He was 'misunderstood in such a way as any human being has never, never been misunderstood by another human being'.<sup>93</sup> His life is 'madness, humanly speaking: he sacrifices himself – in order to make the loved ones just as unhappy as himself'.<sup>94</sup> The natural human being, then, principally cannot recognize Christ as good or praiseworthy, because Christ appears, in light of natural conceptions of the good, *per se* as offensive and foolish. This shows that the first objection has to fail: it is impossible to argue for the moral authority of the command to neighbor love in this indirect manner.

*Second*, someone could object that my interpretation of *Works of Love* fails because Kierkegaard does allow for continuity between the natural human being and the Christian, and their respective moral beliefs. Did Ferreira and Evans not compellingly argue that, according to Kierkegaard, the command appeals to a love that is rooted deeply in human nature?

Kierkegaard, indeed, claims that God, in creating us, placed love in our being.<sup>95</sup> No matter how difficult this may be, we therefore have to presuppose that love is present in the heart of every human being.<sup>96</sup> It expresses itself as the need both to love and to be loved.<sup>97</sup> Yet, careful examination of the passages most important for this subject, shows that the love that we received with our creation expresses itself as 'longing for *companionship*'.<sup>98</sup> Put differently, the love we naturally possess does not express itself as a need for neighbor love, but as a need for *friendship*.<sup>99</sup> Consequently, this second objection also fails. Ferreira and Evans are right in pointing out that Kierkegaard claims we naturally possess love, but they are not right when they conclude that we naturally possess *neighbor love*. Although Kierkegaard believes this natural love is praiseworthy, he also writes that it should undergo 'the change of eternity' to become the love that we are commanded to express.<sup>100</sup> Once again we see,

therefore, that Kierkegaard posits a radical discontinuity between the natural and the Christian spheres (and their conceptions of goodness).

#### IV. Conclusion

In this article, I have critically discussed one aspect of Kierkegaard's account of neighbor love, as worked out in his *Works of Love*: its supposedly limitless character, and its recourses for answering the question 'Why should I live a life of limitless neighbor love?' In Section II, I argued against Jamie Ferreira's influential account of *Works of Love* that there is no textual evidence to justify the claim that Kierkegaard allows for limits on neighbor love. I showed that, on the contrary, there is a lot of textual evidence suggesting that, in Kierkegaard's view, neighbor love is limitless. In Section III, I showed that for Kierkegaard, there cannot, from a natural perspective, possibly exist good reasons to obey the divine command to love one's neighbor. For the natural human being, therefore, the motivation to obey this command can only be self-interested. Consequently, Kierkegaard's ethic of neighbor love undermines itself with regard to the natural human being, because neighbor love cannot arise out of self-interested reasons. Yet, as we have also seen in Section III, the command does possess moral authority from a Christian perspective. It is, according to Kierkegaard, possible to recognize the command to neighbor love as good; that is to say, it *is* possible for human beings to have good reasons to obey this command. This implies the possibility of moral development with regard to the motivation for neighbor love. But this possibility for moral development seems, at the same time, problematic in light of Kierkegaard's emphasis on the radical discontinuity between the natural and the Christian spheres. Is Kierkegaard capable of providing an intelligible and convincing account of the transition from the natural to the Christian sphere?

In conclusion, I believe that we should be critical of a central aspect of *Works of Love*: Kierkegaard's distinction between a natural and a Christian perspective. 'Christian love [...] comes down from heaven to earth.'<sup>101</sup> I consider this sentence to express the core problem of his conception of neighbor love: he understands neighbor love as heavenly and thus as unworldly and unnatural, which is why the command to love one's neighbor necessarily has to be experienced as external, random and offensive by the natural human being. In Kierkegaard's ethic of neighbor love, then, it seems that grace does not perfect nature, but destroys it.<sup>102</sup>

Although I think that Kierkegaard is certainly right to emphasize that the neighbor love we see exemplified in Christ's life (and the lives of many so-called 'ordinary' people) is very radical and demanding, and although everyone will acknowledge that a life in which we are commanded to love all people (even our enemies) is stringent and upsetting, I believe that Kierkegaard exaggerates the offensive and unnatural character of neighbor love. He cannot do justice to an everyday experience most people will recognize: being moved, even emotionally touched, when confronted with genuine works of love. That is, of course, *not* to say that there cannot be many human, all too human considerations and feelings that prevent us from actually *loving* our neighbor. But it *does* show that (the divine command to) neighbor love in fact seems to appeal to something deeply ingrained in ourselves. That Kierkegaard separates the natural and the Christian perspectives so radically fits his strategy of making manifest the specifically Christian view of love. This, of course, greatly improves the clarity of his argument, but – as I hope I have shown – does not improve its persuasiveness.

## Funding

This work was supported by the Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek [grant number 5515].

## Notes

1. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 98–99.
2. *Ibid.*, 180.
3. Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 129.
4. *Ibid.*, 124. See Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, 176–177.
5. Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 129. I agree wholeheartedly with Ferreira's suggestion that evaluating an author's thought can (and quite often does) involve asking questions that that author did not ask him – or herself. Put more concretely: Although Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* is clearly a Christian book, an evaluation of its argument involves abstracting from this Christian perspective as well.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, 113.
8. *Ibid.*, 279.
9. Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 124, 129.
10. *Ibid.*, 132–33.
11. *Ibid.*, 134; Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 266–269.
12. Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 135.
13. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 18.
14. *Ibid.*, 19.
15. Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 130.
16. *Ibid.*, 132.
17. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 22.
18. Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 134–135.
19. *Ibid.*, 133.
20. *Ibid.*, 136.
21. I take this cautious formulation from Ferreira herself: 'One *could* argue that Kierkegaard, too, sees the self's interpretation of itself as created as the source of self-esteem [...].' *Ibid.*, 133 (emphasis mine).
22. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 269.
23. *Ibid.*, 22–23.
24. *Ibid.*, 279.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*, 365.
27. *Ibid.*, 363.
28. *Ibid.*, 132.
29. This expression is taken from: Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 129.
30. See Matthew 4:3.
31. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 184. See also: *Ibid.*, 124: 'But if your ultimate and highest goal is to have life made easy and sociable, then never become involved with Christianity, shun it, because it wants the very opposite; it wants to make your life difficult ....'
32. *Ibid.*, 24–25.
33. This, of course, raises questions about Kierkegaard's relation to the so-called divine command theories of morality. However, I do not have the space to engage myself in debates about these questions here. Although this article touches upon debates concerning divine command theories of morality, it will, therefore, not (explicitly) pay attention to subject of Kierkegaard's ethics and the Euthyphro-dilemma, or to the question whether Kierkegaard defends a divine command theory of morality at all. With regard to the latter question, there has been some debate recently. Defenders of the view that Kierkegaard defends a divine command theory of morality are, among others, Philip L. Quinn and C. Stephen Evans. See, for instance: Quinn, "The primacy of God's will" and Evans, *Kierkegaard's Ethic of Love*. Ferreira has, on the other hand, argued that *Works of Love* does not contain a divine command theory of morality: Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 40–42. And more recently, R. Zachary Manis argued that Kierkegaard does not defend a divine command theory of morality: Manis, "Kierkegaard and divine-command theory".

34. MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*, 72–74.
35. *Ibid.*, 72.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*, 73.
38. Moyaert, *De Mateloosheid van Het Christendom*, 52.
39. *Ibid.* (translation mine).
40. *Ibid.*
41. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 20.
42. Compare Augustine's claim that 'it is impossible to love something that is wholly unknown'. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 46.
43. Moyaert, *De mateloosheid van het christendom*, 27 (translation mine).
44. *Ibid.*, 26 (translation mine).
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.* (translation mine).
47. *Ibid.*, 27 (translation mine).
48. *Ibid.*, 9.
49. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 375.
50. Quinn has written a lot about Kierkegaard's ethic of neighbor love. See, for instance: Quinn, "The Divine Command Ethics" and Quinn, "The Primacy of God's Will." In this article, I will focus on his contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*: Quinn, "Kierkegaard's Christian Ethics".
51. Quinn, "Kierkegaard's Christian Ethics," 353, 366–368.
52. *Ibid.*, 353, 366–368
53. Stern, *Understanding Moral Obligation*, 210.
54. *Ibid.*, 211; Quinn, "Kierkegaard's Christian Ethics," 363–364.
55. Hare, *The Moral Gap*, 1.
56. Quinn, "Kierkegaard's Christian Ethics," 365–367.
57. *Ibid.*, 353, 363, 366–368. See also: Stern, *Understanding Moral Obligation*, 204–207, 211–212.
58. Stern, *Understanding Moral Obligation*, 211. Quinn, "Kierkegaard's Christian Ethics," 361–362.
59. Stern, *Understanding Moral Obligation*, 217–219. Quinn, "Kierkegaard's Christian Ethics," 367–368.
60. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 241.
61. *Ibid.*, 103.
62. Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 7, 21, 26–28, 39–42.
63. *Ibid.*, 41.
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Ibid.*
67. Evans, *Kierkegaard's Ethic of Love*, 161.
68. *Ibid.*, 160–161.
69. *Ibid.*, 169.
70. *Ibid.*, 146.
71. It is, of course, very important to notice that Kierkegaard does not believe that being a member of the worldly form of Christianity (that which he terms 'Christendom') is a necessary, let alone sufficient condition for being Christian. A Christian is a person who relates in a subjective and authentic way to God, which expresses itself in, among others, a self-denying and loving existence that is directed at imitating Christ.
72. Hereafter, I will exclusively refer to the notion 'natural person', except where this is grammatically impossible.
73. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 132.
74. *Ibid.*, 159.
75. *Ibid.*, 103.
76. *Ibid.*, 239.
77. *Ibid.*, 51.
78. *Ibid.*, 52.
79. *Ibid.*, 90.

80. Ibid., 113.
81. Ibid., 118.
82. Ibid., 18.
83. Ibid., 53–56.
84. Ibid., 108–109.
85. Ibid., 127.
86. Ibid., 131.
87. Ibid., 103.
88. Ibid., 269.
89. Ibid., 244.
90. Ibid., 58.
91. Ibid., 145–146.
92. Ibid., 110.
93. Ibid.
94. Ibid., 111.
95. Ibid., 126.
96. Ibid., 216.
97. Ibid., 4, 38, 67, 154–155.
98. Ibid., 154 (emphasis mine).
99. Ibid., 172.
100. Ibid., 39.
101. Ibid., 173.
102. Perhaps it is possible to escape this classical dilemma by introducing a third way in which grace and nature might be related: grace *transforms* nature. Importantly, a transformation seems to involve both continuity and discontinuity. However, we cannot interpret Kierkegaard's views on the relation between the natural and the Christian spheres, and their respective conceptions of goodness and love, in terms of a transformation in this sense, as the break between both is simply too radical. It is not clear what would remain of the natural sphere. That is, transformation would amount to destruction.

### Notes on contributor

Rob Compajjen, MA (1986), is a PhD student at the Department of Philosophy of the University of Antwerp. His research project focuses on the role of rationality in Kierkegaard's ethical thought, mainly by confronting Kierkegaard with contemporary accounts of reasons for action. Recent publications include 'Authenticity and Imitation. On the Role of Moral Exemplarity in Anti-Climacus' Ethics' (Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook 2011) and ' "Ne Quid Nimis." Kierkegaard en de deugd van de matigheid' (Tijdschrift voor Filosofie 75/3, 2013).

### Bibliography

- Augustine. *On the Trinity: Books 8–15*. Edited by Gareth B. Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Evans, C. Stephen. *Kierkegaard's Ethic of Love: Divine Commands and Moral Obligations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Ferreira, M. Jamie. *Love's Grateful Striving: A Commentary on Kierkegaard's Works of Love*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Hare, John E. *The Moral Gap: Kantian Ethics, Human Limits, and God's Assistance*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.
- Kierkegaard, Søren A. *Journals and Papers*. Translated and edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Vol. 2. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970.
- Kierkegaard, Søren A. *Works of Love*. Translated and edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. 3rd ed. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2008.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Routledge, 1998.

- Manis, R. Zachary. "Kierkegaard and Divine-Command Theory: Replies to Quinn and Evans." *Religious Studies* 45, (2009): 289–307. doi:10.1017/S0034412509009925.
- Moyaert, Paul. *De Mateloosheid van Het Christendom: Over Naastenliefde, Betekenisincarnatie En Mystieke Liefde* [*The Measurelessness of Christianity: On Neighbor Love, the Incarnation of Meaning and Mystical Love*]. 2nd ed. Amsterdam: SUN, 2005.
- Quinn, Philip L. "Kierkegaard's Christian Ethics." In *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, edited by Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino, 349–375. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998b.
- Quinn, Philip L. "The Divine Command Ethics in Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*." In *Faith, Freedom, and Rationality: Philosophy of Religion Today*, edited by Jeff Jordan and Daniel Howard-Snyder, 29–44. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996.
- Quinn, Philip L. "The Primacy of God's Will in Christian Ethics." In *Christian Theism and Moral Philosophy*, edited by Michael Beaty, Carlton D. Fisher, and Mark Nelson, 261–285. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998a.
- Stern, Robert. *Understanding Moral Obligation: Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Wisdo, David. "Kierkegaard and Euthyphro." *Philosophy* 62, (1987): 221–226. doi:10.1017/S0031819100064056.

### **License and Permissible Use Notice**

These materials are provided to you by the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) in accordance with the terms of ATLA's agreements with the copyright holder or authorized distributor of the materials, as applicable. In some cases, ATLA may be the copyright holder of these materials.

You may download, print, and share these materials for your individual use as may be permitted by the applicable agreements among the copyright holder, distributors, licensors, licensees, and users of these materials (including, for example, any agreements entered into by the institution or other organization from which you obtained these materials) and in accordance with the fair use principles of United States and international copyright and other applicable laws. You may not, for example, copy or email these materials to multiple web sites or publicly post, distribute for commercial purposes, modify, or create derivative works of these materials without the copyright holder's express prior written permission.

Please contact the copyright holder if you would like to request permission to use these materials, or any part of these materials, in any manner or for any use not permitted by the agreements described above or the fair use provisions of United States and international copyright and other applicable laws. For information regarding the identity of the copyright holder, refer to the copyright information in these materials, if available, or contact ATLA at [products@atla.com](mailto:products@atla.com).

Except as otherwise specified, Copyright © 2016 American Theological Library Association.